

SESS. II.—1891.
NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION: REPORTS OF INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS.

[In Continuation of E.-1B, 1890.]

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

AUCKLAND.

SIR,—

Auckland, 30th January, 1891.

We have the honour to present our report for the year 1890.

Two hundred and sixty schools have been examined in standards, and two hundred and fifty-four have been inspected.

The percentage of passes in standards is 45·2; the percentage of failures is 19·7. These numbers are almost identical with those of last year. Forty-two schools have been reported as “unsatisfactory,” “poor,” or “bad,” as against thirteen so reported in 1889. Hence it appears that about 80 per cent. of the scholars who ought to have passed from a lower to a higher standard did so pass, and that about 84 per cent. of the schools examined are in a state varying from satisfactory to excellent.

We attribute the poor results in some of the schools reported as unsatisfactory to the frequent change of teachers. While this is, perhaps, unavoidable, we cannot refrain from expressing our opinion that it militates greatly against the success of a school as shown at the annual examination.

In estimating the work of any school we have not relied altogether on percentage of failures, passes, or marks. Our judgment in this matter has been modified to a considerable extent by the character of the work done in the several classes, the degree of proficiency in the higher as well as in the lower classes, and the general tone and discipline of the school.

The recent addition to the staff of Inspectors has enabled us this year to pay far more visits of inspection than it has been possible to do heretofore. We find the method of teaching in most cases satisfactory, though sometimes marred in the application. We have no desire to impose a stereotyped style of teaching upon our teachers. We expect no one to work in chains. At the same time we shall certainly continue to exercise our undoubted right of criticizing those methods which we believe to be faulty. Teachers may rest assured that any originality on their part which tends to cultivate the minds of their pupils, and to foster in them a taste for knowledge, will meet with our most cordial approval.

In our last report we remarked on the success with which the small country schools were taught when under the charge of female teachers. We are glad to see that others are of the same opinion. The Otago Inspectors, in their report for 1889, say: “The practice of appointing females as head teachers in many of the smaller rural schools is working well. Female teachers do not move from school to school so frequently as males, and, on the whole, they conduct schools of this class decidedly better than most of the male teachers who fill such positions.”

We have had on several occasions to report on the want of care with which the school records required by the Education Department are kept. It is necessary to remind teachers that neglect in this matter is deserving of the most severe censure.

READING.—In some parts of the district reading has improved; in others the same faults to which attention has so often been called recur. Too little time seems to be devoted to this subject. Teachers, in many instances, do not teach reading; they hear it. The scholars are not trained to break up sentences into phrases; the relative importance of the stops receives but little attention; and the meaning of the words in the text is often explained not in an easy familiar manner, but by a reference to the list of definitions, often mere synonyms, at the end of the lesson. It would be an advantage if two sets of reading-books were used in the lower classes. Teachers complain, with some justice, of the great difference as regards difficulty that exists between the reading-book of Standard IV. and that of Standard V.